

"It is worthy of note that *the fines are only imposed upon women and children*, the most helpless class of operatives. Men will not put up with deduction from wages which they have toiled hard to obtain, and therefore the system is not applied to them. As it is not found necessary in the case of adult male operatives, why should it be practised upon working women and helpless children? Not because of the necessity, but simply because it is passively submitted to. Of all the mean, pitiless exactions which labour has to suffer from, this is the vilest. A young woman will work hard from Monday morning until Saturday evening for a paltry pittance of three or four dollars, and, when pay-day comes, finds that the sum of 25 or 50 cents, or even \$1.00, has been deducted for some trifling breach of the rules, or because of the petty spite of the overseer. Employees are just as liable to be fined for what is purely and entirely an accident, as they are in cases where they have been careless. Advantage is also taken of the system, by forewomen and overseers, to vent their private spleen on the operatives. Fines are imposed, in these cases, for *laughing, for speaking to a fellow employee*, and other similar offences."

Among the fines imposed in the Quebec Cartridge Factory, we find the following: "One of the employees, a girl, had a pair of rubbers stolen during working hours, and forty-five of the employees, including the loser, were fined *5 cents each*. The articles were valued at 50 cents. After the imposition of this fine, the girl did not receive the price of her lost property. In this establishment, one boy had 4 cents and another 7 cents, after their week's work, the balance being paid in fines!"

It would seem difficult to believe that such flagrant robbery of operatives could exist in our neighbour Province, under sanction of law, did it not stand as unimpeachable evidence in the Commission's Report. Yet, unfortunately, the system prevails in Ontario also, where very vexatious instances of it occur. In Britain this practice has been stopped in some industries, notably that of hosiery, though it still prevails to an oppressive extent in others in which women are, as usual, the victims. As the Commission observes, it would be far better were the deductions from wages made illegal in *all* cases, employers being, of course, at perfect liberty to dismiss incurably careless employees.

But, it may be asked by some new to such subjects, why will even *girls* submit to such petty tyranny? The answer lies in the hard necessity of poverty, which compels them to take the work on the terms offered, and makes them so much afraid of dismissal that they will seldom even complain of oppression. In the cotton-mills, especially, where the work and the conditions of work are generally hardest, workers are usually drawn from the poorest class, in which, it may be, there is no father to win the daily bread, or, if there be one, no work for him during the long winter. Or the father may be a drinking man, bringing home little for his family's support. The over-burdened mothers are but too anxious to turn out their daughters to earn something for the family needs, even before the permitted age of fourteen. They have had no training to fit them for domestic service, to which they do not take kindly, and perhaps their experience of a first venture into it has not been a happy one, and has given them a strong prejudice against it, which the mothers are often willing to encourage, as they can secure more of their earnings at the factory, and they do not seem to miss their board. The girls are, of course, too young and ignorant to realise the way in which these conditions of work will tell on their constitutions, while their mothers are either too ignorant or too much absorbed in the hard task of making ends meet; and so the poor girls become the unconscious sacrifices, in many cases as truly, though not so speedily, as did the victims of the Minotaur of Crete. It is not merely the long continuous hours of work,—the nervous strain of standing or walking for so many hours, tending perpetually moving machines, which is, as doctors tell us, too severe for many constitutions. But when, in addition to this, we remember that they have to be at their places of work before half-past six, winter as well as in summer, and in all kinds of weather; that in some cases they have to take their breakfast with them, which they must eat as they work; that the rooms in which they have to work are often unwholesomely hot or damp, and always pervaded with the smell of oil and machinery; that, while many of them have to stand or walk during the whole eleven hours—even the

dinner-hour of supposed rest is, in some mills, twice a week invaded by the work of *cleaning their looms*, etc., for which provision ought to be made during the regular hours of work, can we wonder that their physical health often suffers, and that anæmic conditions result, predisposing them to bronchitis, pneumonia, and heart-failure, and too often leading to an eventual collapse? The only wonder is that this does not happen more frequently, but, as one doctor has remarked, the frequent necessity for tonics and other medicines more than counterbalances, in many cases, the little extra pay they earn in the prolonged hours. Insufficient food and clothing, too, added to exposure in all kinds of weather, is another source of danger, for, though the girls are engaged in manufacturing large quantities of goods, they are, in many cases, unable to procure the warm clothing they require; although in many cases, also, they are tempted to prefer the ornamental to the useful. As a rule, the girls take the hardships of their lot with a passive resignation that is pathetic,—the resignation of "dumb, driven cattle." They are evidently afraid to utter a word of complaint, lest, by any chance, it might reach their employers' ears, and lead to their dismissal from what seems to them the only alternative to the bugbear—as they regard it—of domestic service. Their mothers, in general, give them little sympathy and no encouragement to find fault with their lot, and try to make out that "they get used to it." But, when they feel free to speak, they will admit that they often feel "dragged down," and that their work leaves them little strength or energy for anything like mental improvement. In their evenings they are either fit for little else than needed rest, or their over-taxed and jaded faculties demand some highly stimulating amusement, which seldom fails to bring evil consequences in its train. Too often, they seem to become almost as much machines as the spinning "mules" they tend—simply producers of so much goods—knowing scarcely anything of the interests and pleasures of the awakened mind. The degradation of their higher faculties is almost sadder than that of their physical constitution. Man was not made to live by bread alone, but these girls seem to live but to earn the daily bread which gives them strength to continue working! In other words, they are human, self-feeding machines! The Saturday half holiday, earned by five days of eleven hours' toil, is mainly devoted to necessary work at home, and Sunday, of course, in such circumstances, can be little more than a day of physical rest. So far as they are concerned, the countless opportunities for mental and moral growth that surround them are practically non-existent. It is useless to think of teaching them to make a good use of their leisure, until they *first secure the leisure*. All benevolent attempts to provide educational facilities for their use are to a great extent useless for girls under the system of hours to which we have been referring. Of course there are, happily, many working girls much more happily circumstanced, especially in Toronto, and many of these can and do make good use of their evenings, disproving the oft-reiterated charge, that girls only want their evenings for gadding about.

But, moreover, is it likely that girls under such a system will be fitted for becoming good wives and mothers? Yet it is often just such girls who naturally rush into imprudent premature marriages, the fruitful source of the abject poverty which perpetuates itself and other evils to succeeding generations. Young women comfortably settled in domestic service, with good mistresses, are not nearly so apt to marry mere lads, in such imprudent haste. But these poor girls are, of course, glad of this avenue of escape from the wearying monotony of their daily work, and the discomforts of the untimely hours; and hence arises no small amount of our increasing pauperism. If the loss to the community in this way could be balanced against all the supposed profits from long hours of work, the offset would prove a heavy one, involving far worse than pecuniary loss to the country at large.

Still another and very serious consideration must be merely suggested. As has been already said, the long strain of so many hours of monotonous labour induces in these girls a craving for exciting amusement, just as in men,—as testified in labour evidence,—it induces in the over-wearied labourer, a craving for stimulant of another kind. In young women it often takes forms fraught with great danger to their best interests, and has led many an unfortunate into the paths of despair. When all evil is judged aright, on which